

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



# Labor Participation – A Way to Industrial Democracy La participation des travailleurs : un moyen d'atteindre la démocratie industrielle

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Volume 33, numéro 3, 1978

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/028886ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/028886ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)

1703-8138 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Barkin, S. (1978). Labor Participation – A Way to Industrial Democracy. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 33(3), 391–405. <https://doi.org/10.7202/028886ar>

### Résumé de l'article

La démocratie politique a débarrassé le monde des théories de la monarchie de droit divin. Le gouvernement représentatif l'a remplacé. Les restrictions au droit de vote qui ont marqué les premiers temps de la nouvelle ère démocratique ont cédé le pas devant les exigences du suffrage universel dont l'objectif fut atteint au cours des années 1920 et qui s'étendit aux moins de vingt ans pendant la décennie actuelle.

En contrepartie, la démocratie industrielle devint à son tour l'objectif véritable de divers réformateurs : groupe libéraux et anticapitalistes ainsi que partisans du syndicalisme. Le processus de décision au sein de l'entreprise devint la cible des partisans de la démocratie industrielle qui cherchent à obtenir pour les salariés ces droits supérieurs ou, à tout le moins, une participation égale à la direction. Cependant, on a fermement résisté à ce défi. Débats et propositions tournoient autour de cette pomme de discorde : le rôle et la forme de la démocratie industrielle dans l'entreprise et, une fois engagée dans le processus de sélection des problèmes, l'étude, l'analyse, la recherche de solutions, la détermination de la décision finale et les méthodes de mise en œuvre dont disposeront les salariés et leur syndicat ainsi que la façon dont ils partagent les responsabilités avec la direction. Il ne faut voir dans les aménagements actuels que des accommodements transitoires dans la recherche interminable de mécanismes viables, satisfaisants et profitables.

Partis d'une position d'autorité incontestée, les promoteurs de l'industrialisme naissant dans les pays occidentaux ont mis vigoureusement l'accent sur la poursuite d'objectifs d'ordre économique qu'ils tempérèrent par des mesures philanthropiques envers leurs salariés. Avec le temps, de telles pratiques autocratiques ont ouvert la voie à un nouveau type et à de nouvelles éthiques de direction qui maintinrent la conviction fondamentale que les prérogatives dans l'entreprise seraient conservées. Le processus d'humanisation du travail se concentra sur la tâche considérée en soi plutôt que sur l'ambiance globale du milieu de travail et la carrière personnelle. La direction des entreprises en Europe, beaucoup plus qu'aux États-Unis, se tourna vers les syndicats ou les comités d'entreprise pour appuyer les innovations au niveau de la tâche et de son exécution. Un comportement davantage humanisé à l'intérieur de l'entreprise associé à des décisions prises bilatéralement ou multilatéralement et l'amélioration de la vie hors du milieu de travail constituent l'ossature de nouvelles avenues vers une meilleure qualité de vie.

Dans l'après-guerre, les syndicats des pays de l'Europe du Nord ont d'abord mis l'accent sur les ententes nationales ou sectorielles. Ils ne se sont pas opposés de prime abord aux comités d'entreprise non plus qu'ils ne les ont pris en main, mais ils ont plutôt cherché à profiter de leurs pouvoirs législatifs, de la protection et des moyens qu'ils offraient d'obtenir un redressement limité. Pendant la troisième décennie d'après-guerre, ils ont de nouveau manœuvré de manière à renforcer leurs positions et leurs droits au niveau des tâches et à l'intérieur de l'entreprise, souvent en se servant du mécanisme légal officiel, y compris les comités d'entreprise, des comités spéciaux de travailleurs et des organismes de sécurité nouvellement institués.

Se rendant compte que les politiques relatives aux travailleurs sont souvent prises par les bureaux de direction, certaines centrales syndicales ont lutté pour y obtenir le droit de présence, cherchant à y être représentées à tous les échelons, c'est-à-dire tant au niveau de l'entreprise qu'au plan sectoriel et national, d'où il convient de noter la diminution de l'intérêt parmi les syndicats pour la nationalisation de l'industrie.

La cogestion, entendue dans le sens allemand, se réfère populairement à la représentation directe ou indirecte des salariés dans les bureaux de direction, ordinairement par l'entremise des comités de surveillance qui sont distincts des bureaux de direction. Dans huit pays d'Europe, où il existe des aménagements exigés par la Loi, les formules de participation diffèrent des modèles idéaux des syndicats.

Les syndicalistes, qui favorisent une telle représentation, ont dû faire face à de la résistance à l'intérieur de leurs organisations, et bon nombre de centrales européennes s'opposent à une telle orientation, estimant que cette innovation est de nature à compromettre les syndicats en même temps qu'elles préfèrent une attitude plus militante, sinon en fait, du moins en parole. Les centrales syndicales en certains pays considèrent la présence des salariés comme un moyen de se familiariser davantage avec le fonctionnement et le développement de l'entreprise, d'influencer les décisions et aussi d'accroître leur pouvoir de négociation.

Autre initiative dans ce domaine : en certains pays, les syndicats demandent et obtiennent le droit à l'information ou d'être présents dans les consultations des entreprises auprès des gouvernements en matière d'aide financière ou autre.

Un élément de retard dans l'application de ces systèmes réside dans l'attitude peu amicale d'un nombre considérable de directeurs et d'autres membres des bureaux de direction qui ne sont pas des salariés.

Il est impossible de comprendre la participation ouvrière dans l'élaboration des décisions sans insister sur le rôle de plus en plus grand que jouent les syndicats dans le domaine politique. Un nouvel accroissement de l'influence du syndicalisme sur les gouvernements était évident en Europe de l'ouest au cours de la troisième décennie d'après-guerre. Les programmes sociaux et économiques des gouvernements travaillistes furent définis après discussion avec les syndicats et souvent en accord avec eux. Les syndicats sont devenus plus militants et ont exercé une influence marquée sur la politique gouvernementale. Sans doute l'expression la plus significative de ce nouveau rôle consiste-t-elle dans le « contrat social » auquel on en est arrivé entre les gouvernements travaillistes et les centrales syndicales touchant l'économie nationale, les relations professionnelles et la politique sociale.

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# Labor Participation : A Way to Industrial Democracy

**Solomon Barkin**

*The author examines the role and forms of industrial democracy in the enterprise and when in the process of selection of questions, study and analysis, search for solutions and defining the final decision and which methods of implementation shall employees and their union share, and in what manner, the responsibilities of decision-making with management. Current arrangements must be viewed essentially as transitional accommodations in the unending search for viable, more satisfying and productive plans.*

Political democracy in the Western World swept away the theories of the «divine rights of kings.» Representative government followed. Then the restrictions on suffrage instituted in the early years of the new democratic era gave way before the demands for universal suffrage made by the Liberal and the Socialist parties supported by the great mass of people who had accepted the philosophies and slogans of the political revolutions. The goal was reached in the 1920's and extended to the late teenagers in the seventies.

Its counterpart, industrial democracy, became an active goal for diverse reformers, liberals and anti-capitalist groups, as well as the advocates of unionism. As workers grew in number, absorbing Christian and Socialist doctrines, the real confrontation began on the issue. By that time property-owners and corporations had had their rights sanctioned in practice and law. The decision-making process in the enterprise became the target of the advocates of industrial democracy seeking to gain for employees supreme rights or at least those equal to management.

But this challenge has been stoutly resisted. Owners and managers disputed and fought the counterclaimants. They defended and enhanced

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their positions and spheres of sovereignty and would yield as little as possible of the power to control and direct.

Concurrently they endeavored to capitalize for managements' ends on employees' self-consciousness and yearnings for improved jobs and working conditions, better earnings and participation in local decision-making.

Both management and labor projected over time newer devices, formulas, and theories better to advance or defend their positions. The debate and proposals gyrated explicitly or implicitly about the same area of contention: the role and forms of industrial democracy in the enterprise and when in the process of selection of questions, study and analysis, search for solutions and defining the final decision and which methods of implementation shall employees and their union share, and in what manner, the responsibilities of decision-making with management. Current arrangements must be viewed essentially as transitional accommodations in the unending search for viable, more satisfying and productive plans.

## **MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES: ORGANIZATIONS RELATIONS AND WORK SATISFACTION.**

### **Managements' Personnel Policies**

Starting from a position of unchallenged authority, managements in the early days of industrialism in the western countries forcefully pressed their economic goals, moderating them to act on their philanthropic dispositions toward employees. In time such autocratic practices had to give way to a more «humane» spirit. Managements in the United States in the twenties moved toward «welfare capitalism» and experimented with «employee representation» plans, to cool incipient and actual industrial unrest and deal with the Americanized work force. These initiatives were swept away in the thirties and forties. In the United States the force was industrial unionism; in northern Europe it was the ascendant Social Democratic parties and the broader acceptance of unions and collective bargaining.

The post-war era demanded new management styles and philosophies but retained the basic conviction that managements' prerogatives in the enterprise would be carefully preserved. In the United States first appeared «human relations approaches» to accommodate to and counter trade union growth. The preeminent appeal was to the individual employee by way of humanized management and supervision. Personal

counseling, sensitive supervision, extensive communication and more humane treatment were the tools, but not changes in the job itself. The objective was to gain employee identification with or even sanction for management and enterprise goals, or, at least, acquiescence and acceptance. With the decline in the threat of a broader penetration of unionism in the private sector, management leaders in the sixties took up a more relaxed and variegated approach including recognition of the pluralistic nature of the enterprise and the differences in expectations among groups of employees, generally referred to as «organizational behaviour.» Still basically oriented to the closed plant society, it focused on cultivating job satisfaction, and higher productivity and stability on the discrete job in the immediate environment and in the peripheral relations with other work groups. Accommodations to diverse groups did not call for the sharing of specific elements of authority or gains. Job redesign, improved supervision, better personal relations and acceptance, at times, of employee consultation on job rearrangements became part of the new pattern. The emphasis is on the job or work shop level.

### **Job Redesign**

As the issues of the «quality of life» gained great currency at the beginning of the seventies, the above developments became part of the discussion of labor participation. Excesses of Taylorism and «scientific management» had to be connected. Routinized jobs had deprived employees of responsibilities and a role in job decision-making. Earlier proposals were now assembled to create the balance; job rotation, alteration of job tasks; job enlargement, both horizontal and vertical, a form of rotation to overcome monotony by expanding the range of duties; and finally, job enrichment, the addition of limited responsibilities for the organization, planning, testing and final delivery of work to endow the employee with a feeling of product creation. The effort reached few United States employees, estimated to be some three thousand.

The humanization process usually concentrated on a specific aspect of the individual job rather than the total work environment and personal career. «Human resource accounting» was added to the kit of tools in the hope of finding a system for formal evaluation and auditing of costs and pay-offs for personnel activities and improved employee utilization as well as increased individual employee self-realization, and financial advancement.

### **European Job Developments**

These trends find some replication in Western Europe, but the more distinctively innovative experiences on the continent stem from different industrial and political environments. Action there could not simply be reactive and defensive. Unions are better organized and militant. Many governments are led by Social Democrats or other allies responsive to trade union aspirations. Management leaders are generally more determined to prove their sensitivity to employee needs to gain their overt good-will and that of the unions. Swedish employers are foremost in the organized search of new concepts and paths, not only in the matter of personnel and management practice but also in the design of plant, process and machinery.

Managements in Europe more often than in the United States turn to unions and/or work councils to support innovations at the job and operating level. Scandinavian national trade union centers joined management associations in sponsoring experiments and advances. Autonomous self-governing democratic workgroups, essentially collective substitutes for individual job design, symbolize the types of ventures favored in these areas. Management consultations with unions and work councils on innovations occur not only after decisions are made, but before the problems are selected and during the course of study and analysis and their aid is solicited in the decision-making process. In Sweden, the new laws require most of these steps.

In Italy, trade unions grasped the initiative in the field of job and career redesign, after they supplanted the works councils in the seventies. They integrated union-oriented values into the program including the advancement of employee career patterns rather than mere personal job fulfillment, employee skill versatility and higher job grades. The German trade union movements «work humanizing» program embraces not only the employee's immediate job, stressing group work, a minimal hierarchical structure, participation in work decisions, information and career developments, but also his total social environment, stressing that off-the-job tensions and frustrations are inseparable from those on the job.

### **Scope of Job Redesign**

The latter view raises serious questions concerning past management initiatives. More than relief from job monotony created by existing technology or job arrangements or designs is required. It is an appropriate target for the further «humanization of work» but there are

other dimensions. The Tavistock Institute (British) in its writings and research efforts projected the enterprise not only as an economic unit but also as a « socio-technical system. » In Europe many unions demand new forms for bilateral decision-making through the plant bargaining structure or the corporate bodies. The quality of nonoccupational and communal life intimately affect and condition job and plant attitudes, satisfactions and performance. Humanized organizational behavior coupled with bilateral or multi-lateral decision-making and improvement of the off-the-job life constitute the framework for the new drives for a higher quality of life.

## **EMPLOYEE AND TRADE UNION DRIVES FOR INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY**

### **Goals and General Rights**

For almost two centuries, industrial protest movements gravitated to the demands for industrial democracy. These are from time to time stated differently and the shibboleths are altered. But each calls for the elimination or restriction of the rights of the dominant industrial hierarchy and the expansion of employee rights. Sometimes specific proposals are relatively modest, seniority rules to curb capricious management; at other times, they move for major changes, the introduction of collective bargaining.

In the past history of industrial democracy the emphasis has been upon class rights and general principles rather than as in the preceding section upon individual jobs or employees. Even the American craft-union, conservative in its orientation, preoccupied as it is with its membership presented its demands for security for a collectivity, the whole labor market. After a general principles are *enscribed*, attention is shifted to the individual to ensure that he enjoys the rights and benefits assured under these principles. The Italian trade union programs for the humanization of work were first negotiated with management in the form of principles and the applied to the individual or group. The movement for industrial democracy has a distinctive orientation: it is dedicated to collective principles and not in the first instance to the discrete individual.

### **Trade Unionism and Collective Bargaining: A Stage of Industrial Democracy**

The realistic search for industrial democracy in western countries began with the struggle for union recognition and bilateral decision-making (collective bargaining). In North America, the course can be

clearly traced. Preambles to the constitutions of several trade unions drafted before World War I proclaimed their goal as industrial democracy. Appeals to workers to organize were made in these terms.

Where unions and collective bargaining were initiated, they followed either one of two patterns of relations. Either they created an industrial government or a joint labor-management system of decision-making on matters in the contract or on which they agreed, with the former becoming the more pervasive. Unions sought the unfolding contract with an ever broadening area of joint concern. The conflict on the scope of collective bargaining grew as managements defended their «prerogatives.» The National Labor Relations Board and the courts interpretations of the law extended this scope of bargaining.

But this issue in the sixties lost much of its primary in the private sector. In fact, under the pressure of recent economic adversity in unionized areas, established protective control and practices have been lost in many areas. Aggressive management eliminated many islands of employee self-government. In other instances, unions accepted the abridgement and elimination of long established working rules. Movements both toward the abridgement and expansion of the scope of bargaining are being reported in the public sector. Teachers are seeking to gain veto powers over management decisions or rights to bilateral decision-making. Public managements across the country are introducing severe controls and eliminating well-established or negotiated employee practices. Clashes in these areas are likely to occupy the center of the industrial relations scene in the public sector. Few are the cases this country of bilateral decision-making deliberately serving concurrently to enhance employee and institutional goals.

#### **European Unions Move to Supersede the Works Councils**

European developments have been very different. Unions fought for survival well into the thirties. The dictators destroyed many of these unions. In Northern Europe when they revived, their emphasis was on national or industry agreements, rather than the workplace or local controls. They sought immediate security through minimum terms of employment and a skeleton of rights by contract and law. Full employment and the new progressive attitudes led to improved working conditions, and benefits, higher standards of living and the humanization of personnel practices. Social legislation reinforced and supplemented these advances. Progress appeared continuous.

But union weaknesses in the shops persisted, in part due to the divisions within their ranks. Unions, therefore, did not challenge or take over the works council but rather sought to benefit from their legal powers and the protection they provided and the channels they afforded for limited redress. In the third postwar decade under the impulses of new employee militancy, expressed in occasional factory occupations, work sit-ins, plant take-overs, and unofficial strikes, and the popularization of humanistic views, European unions moved anew to strengthen their own positions and rights on the job, and within the enterprise.

Trade unions followed several alternative courses. Of course many concentrated on building their local organizations. In some countries they took over direct control of the works councils, even where they were creatures of the law. Councils membership had been predominantly composed of trade unionists, but union relations with and direction of them now became direct and firm. Union representatives gained legal rights for their presence at meetings and to offer counsel to the councils. Management influence was minimized, by eliminating management chairmen and converting the councils into workers councils. Trade union pressures helped expand the councils' authority. French councils had self-government rights over social programs; codetermination rights became more extensive, councils could now negotiate over social welfare, personnel policies, individual measures and economic issues, resorting to outside arbitration in case of unresolved differences. Rights for consultation grew broader extending to economic and managerial issues. Information including intimate financial production and management data became accessible with many councils enjoying the right to call in outside experts to aid in the analysis.

These gains must be considered transitional advances to the realization of a more ambitious vision. Unions want direct representation in the shop either by contract or law. Where the right had been gained, their representatives at times superseded the works councils as in Belgium, Italy and the United Kingdom. In other countries they desisted from pressing for the full transfers of council authority being satisfied to utilize the councils legal privileges to information, consultation and bilateral decision-making which management would resist granting to the unions themselves. To enhance the effectiveness of this representation trade unions devote much energy, personnel and funds to the training of the councilors.

Philosophical and legalistic distinctions between the two systems of employee representation are fading. Dual arrangements persist in



France, Germany and Netherlands, often in a competitive relation to one another, particularly where managements as in France seek to limit the union's presence and growth of authority in the plant.

In the Scandinavian countries, works councils are creatures of collective agreements. They are integral parts of the union apparatus. Recent legislation increased the protection for the stewards and council members and the freedom to discharge their duties. In Great Britain the shop steward system was ironically strengthened in the early post-war years by managements to avoid the formal collective bargaining machinery. The steward created an independent bargaining system superimposed upon the formal one. They were accepted in the latter sixties by more democratically-oriented national union leadership. Their functions were recognized as vital both to the union and the collective bargaining system.

The industrial democracy movement in Europe in the last decade expressed itself substantially in efforts to strengthen the union presence and its representational and bargaining functions at the job and plant levels often utilizing the formal legal machinery including the works councils, special employee committees and recently constituted safety enforcement machinery. Their activities, penetration and influence on the job and in the internal plant administration mounted. Further developments are still in progress; differences among countries and companies within a country are considerable. The direction appears clear; future events will help shape the specific designs in each country. They offer the increased possibility of creating a coherent single plant and job system of bilateral bargaining, consultation and informational analysis.

#### **Influencing Corporate Policies Impacting on Employee Interests-Co-Determination and Employee Corporate Board Directors**

Recognizing that many policies affecting employees are shaped by corporate boards of directors, some national union centers fought for a presence on them seeking a continuum of the representational process from the lowest job to enterprise, industry and national levels. Noteworthy is the diminished interest among unions in the nationalization of industry; they perceived that the shift to public ownership primarily leads to a more favorable accommodation with public sector business leadership. But this end could be realized even more generally through board representation. Nationalization now looms high in union circles

when other objectives are foremost such as the development of energy industries, or the reorganization of distressed industries or doctrinaire positions.

Codetermination in its German meaning refers popularly to direct or indirect employee representation on the board of directors usually in the supervisory as distinct from management boards. In eight European countries where such arrangements are prescribed by law, the plans differ from any idealized union model and among themselves. Except for France and Germany the legislation was enacted in the last few years. All bear the stamp of employer resistance and political conflict. First, unions designate part of the employee delegation only in Germany, Luxembourg and two members per board in Sweden. Works councils nominate them in Austria and France; the work force selects them in Denmark and Norway, though in the latter the election is for members of a plant assembly which elects the directors who include two or up to one-third of the board. In the Netherlands, where the board coopts its own additions and receives nominations from the council, the latter retains a right to veto. Second, minority representation for employees prevails except in the original 1951 system for the German iron and steel industry where there is a parity arrangement. Under the 1976 German law for large scale industry, the parity principle is compromised by the inclusion of a senior executive in the employee group and the assurance of the designation of a management person as chairman. Third, various restrictions are placed on the selection of union officials tending to establish preferences for actual employees and limiting if not excluding the former from the employee delegation. Fourth, many conditions including requirements for secrecy, assumption of financial responsibilities with other board members for board acts, and inhibitions on participation in industrial action, or wage negotiations create barriers between board members and the employees. The reality is still a distance from the abstract ideal. But already changes in law and practices are being instituted to remove some harsh deterrents to an effective presence as witness the new Swedish law.

Unionists favoring such representation have met resistance within their organizations and a number of European union centers oppose such moves, viewing the innovation as compromising the unions and preferring certainly in their rhetoric if not in fact a more militant stance. Other unionists protest their confidence in not being coopted and the value of systems for promoting employee interests and ultimately the ability to affect corporate production and financial policy. In the German

experience, individual illustrations of such influence accumulated particularly during periods of economic stress lie primarily in the field of personnel action, and are important in view of the traditional authoritarian management attitudes and policy and on occasion in the broader business field such as investment in foreign production facilities. Union centers in other countries view the employee presence as a way to familiarize themselves intimately with enterprise operations and developments and influence decisions and also improve their powers in collective bargaining. Increased union attention and funds are being devoted to the training of such employee directors, with provisions increasing for making experts available for consultation. More distant is the introduction of new criteria for corporate decision-making emphasizing social employee oriented tests for many issues including new investment. Reports from individual employee directors suggest that they have raised some basic questions in business policy which are being explored by some boards. The entire field is quite new and its development must be followed carefully before judgments on its operations and consequences may be expressed. Both in Germany and Sweden, employers report considerably satisfaction with past experiences.

Another initiative in this field may be found in countries where unions are demanding and obtaining rights to information about or a presence in government consultations with business enterprise applying for government financial or other aid. The expansion of the economic staffs of a number of national union centers came in part from the need to offer more active counsel to works council and employee board members. A veritable union technical library is developing which will permit closer study of comparative views and experience.

One restricting factor on the easy growth of these systems is the unfriendly attitude of a considerable number of managements and non-employee members of the boards. The German and Swedish official literature report cases of deliberate efforts to hamper employee board members in the discharge of functions and the deprivation of essential information. The new Swedish law seeks to correct some of these conditions but we must learn of its effectiveness.

Finally, reference must be made to the innovation in the German iron-steel industry system of the nomination of a Labor Director by the trade union, confirmed by employee directors as one of the three management directors. While no such requirement exists in other countries, employee directors do promote more favorable selections for the post.

**Collectively Negotiated Savings Plan for Capital Formation**

The debate in Sweden about a collectively negotiated savings plan for capital formation (Meidner Plan) gave international currency to this idea. It had its origin in the sixties in Italy. Basically the plan provides for portion of the corporate profits to be set aside for a workers fund to be administered by trade union designers, thereby assuring them a voice in the allocation of funds for new investments. After a period of time accumulations in some companies may entitle the fund to a place on the company's board of directors. Employee claims are frozen for a period of years, after which individuals become eligible for benefits, to be used largely for house purchasing or similar goods or retirement benefits. The plan seeks equalize the capital claims among the social classes.

A very modest application of this idea exists in Germany which results from industry negotiations and operates within the limits of tax laws which grant participants special benefits and an additional public bonus. It hardly approximates the bolder ambitions underlying the plans being discussed in other countries.

Many divisions of the trade union movement oppose these plans preferring to pursue aggressive collective bargaining. Employers tend to counter these proposals with recommendations for individual profit sharing systems with direct immediate benefits to individual employees.

**Labor Participation in Public Policy Decision-Making (Social Contract) and Administration**

No understanding of the developments in labor participation in decision-making could be adequate without pointing to the expanding role of European unions in the area of public policy decision-making and its administration. The first extension into this field occurred during World War I. Trade union officials occupied ministerial, policy and administrative posts. Unions gained a level of recognition never before envisaged by the dominant political groups. With the general relapse in unionism during the twenties their influence declined but swept upwards in the thirties particularly in the Scandinavian countries with their Social Democratic parties and in others as countries drew closer to the or engaged in war. Representatives of the movement were brought into cabinets and high government positions. In the fifties and in the first half of the sixties, with centrist and conservative governments in power, few new advances occurred.

A new upsurge in influence on government was evident in the third post-war decade. Consultations on economic and social policy became widespread. Labor government programs were generally defined after discussions with unions and often jointly agreed upon. Unions generally became more militant and exercised a radical influence on government policy. Probably the most significant expression of this new role is the Social Contract, reached between the Labor governments and the trade union organizations on national economic, industrial relations and social policy. As members of advisory investigatory and administrative public bodies, and of parliaments their influence affected national life.

### CONCLUSION

The demand for industrial democracy has been persistent in Western society. The major instrument for this pressure has been the trade union movement. Increased education and high expectations of the work force and a long period of very high employment and new attitudes persuaded management to humanize working conditions and give increasing recognition to employees' desires. Besides seeking better financial rewards, working conditions, employees also expected less degrading social relations on the job. Participation in decision-making about work and jobs became a lively demand along with the expectation of equal opportunities for social advancement for all classes.

Participation in bilateral decision-making rather than consultation or communication appeared to be the clear road for employees and their spokesmen, the union. Such participation would enable them to use their insights and knowledge to help shape business policy better to accord with human and social needs. Managements feared the loss of status and power should they yield and also the economic consequences, should non-economic values prevail. Nevertheless the last hundred years or more witnessed a steady erosion of management's authority. Unions were recognized and then collective bargaining rights. The scope of bilateral decision-making on wages, hours, and conditions of employment expanded. Unions thereafter sought the means for making their views felt at the company board and national levels. Codetermination, employee board directors and collectively negotiated savings plans became means to this end. Another was political pressure on governments making them more understanding and responsive to employee and union views for redesigning the total economy toward more socially oriented goals. The Social Contract evolved combining an agreement between government and unions on

the principles for terms of employment and economic and industrial relations and social policy.

Spurred on by the new alertness and demands of employees for more active participation in decision-making both in the trade unions and on the job, more unions particularly in Europe pressed for the total humanization of work conditions. The first target was more active union pressure on the job. Then came the expansion of the rights of the works council which in fact was converted in many places into a workers council. Trade unions moved to gain greater rights for representation from the job through the national level. Some introduced new dimensions into the rules for job redesign.

No one country can boast of having achieved these goals or provided the mechanism for realizing them. The recent advances are too new truly to evaluate the gains. Most schemes are compromises between union demands and management resistance and other political forces. Should the process continue as seems likely, these arrangements will undergo vast change. New devices will be recurrently fashioned to remain responsive concurrently accomodating both the expectations of the employees and the realities of a competitive economic world. This is a wholly new course. No social arrangements can be considered rigid and final. That is particularly true of the agencies for industrial democracy shaped in the dynamic arena of controversy, conflict and compromise.

### **La participation des travailleurs : un moyen d'atteindre la démocratie industrielle**

La démocratie politique a débarassé le monde des théories de la monarchie de droit divin. Le gouvernement représentatif l'a remplacé. Les restrictions au droit de vote qui ont marqué les premiers temps de la nouvelle ère démocratique ont cédé le pas devant les exigences du suffrage universel dont l'objectif fut atteint au cours des années 1920 et qui s'étendit aux moins de vingt ans pendant la décennie actuelle.

En contrepartie, la démocratie industrielle devint à son tour l'objectif véritable de divers réformateurs: groupe libéraux et anticapitalistes ainsi que partisans du syndicalisme. Le processus de décision au sein de l'entreprise devint la cible des partisans de la démocratie industrielle qui cherchent à obtenir pour les salariés ces droits suprêmes ou, à tout le moins, une participation égale à la direction. Cependant, on a fermement résisté à ce défi. Débats et propositions tournoient autour de cette pomme de discorde: le rôle et la

forme de la démocratie industrielle dans l'entreprise et, une fois engagé dans le processus de sélection des problèmes, l'étude, l'analyse, la recherche de solutions, la détermination de la décision finale et les méthodes de mise en œuvre dont disposeront les salariés et leur syndicat ainsi que la façon dont ils partagent les responsabilités avec la direction. Il ne faut voir dans les aménagements actuels que des accommodements transitoires dans la recherche interminable de mécanismes viables, satisfaisants et profitables.

Partis d'une position d'autorité incontestée, les promoteurs de l'industrialisme naissant dans les pays occidentaux ont mis vigoureusement l'accent sur la poursuite d'objectifs d'ordre économique qu'ils tempéraient par des mesures philanthropiques envers leurs salariés. Avec le temps, de telles pratiques autocratiques ont ouvert la voie à un nouveau type et à de nouvelles éthiques de direction qui maintinrent la conviction fondamentale que les prérogatives dans l'entreprise seraient conservées. Le processus d'humanisation du travail se concentra sur la tâche considérée en soi plutôt que sur l'ambiance globale du milieu de travail et la carrière personnelle. La direction des entreprises en Europe, beaucoup plus qu'aux États-Unis, se tourna vers les syndicats ou les comités d'entreprise pour appuyer les innovations au niveau de la tâche et de son exécution. Un comportement davantage humanisé à l'intérieur de l'entreprise associé à des décisions prises bilatéralement ou multilatéralement et l'amélioration de la vie hors du milieu de travail constituent l'ossature de nouvelles avenues vers une meilleure qualité de vie.

Dans l'après-guerre, les syndicats des pays de l'Europe du Nord ont d'abord mis l'accent sur les ententes nationales ou sectorielles. Ils ne se sont pas opposés de prime abord aux comités d'entreprise non plus qu'ils ne les ont pris en main, mais ils ont plutôt cherché à profiter de leurs pouvoirs législatifs, de la protection et des moyens qu'ils offraient d'obtenir un redressement limité. Pendant la troisième décennie d'après-guerre, ils ont de nouveau manœuvré de manière à renforcer leurs positions et leurs droits au niveau des tâches et à l'intérieur de l'entreprise, souvent en se servant du mécanisme légal officiel, y compris les comités d'entreprise, des comités spéciaux de travailleurs et des organismes de sécurité nouvellement institués.

Se rendant compte que les politiques relatives aux travailleurs sont souvent prises par les bureaux de direction, certaines centrales syndicales ont lutté pour y obtenir le droit de présence, cherchant à y être représentées à tous les échelons, c'est-à-dire tant au niveau de l'entreprise qu'au plan sectoriel et national, d'où il convient de noter la diminution de l'intérêt parmi les syndicats pour la nationalisation de l'industrie.

La cogestion, entendue dans le sens allemand, se réfère populairement à la représentation directe ou indirecte des salariés dans les bureaux de direction, ordinairement par l'entremise des comités de surveillance qui sont distincts des bureaux de direction. Dans huit pays d'Europe, où il existe des aménagements exigés par la Loi, les formules de participation diffèrent des modèles idéaux des syndicats.

Les syndicalistes, qui favorisent une telle représentation, ont dû faire face à de la résistance à l'intérieur de leurs organisations, et bon nombre de centrales européennes s'opposent à une telle orientation, estimant que

cette innovation est de nature à compromettre les syndicats en même temps qu'elles préfèrent une attitude plus militante, sinon en fait, du moins en parole. Les centrales syndicales en certains pays considèrent la présence des salariés comme un moyen de se familiariser davantage avec le fonctionnement et le développement de l'entreprise, d'influencer les décisions et aussi d'accroître leur pouvoir de négociation.

Autre initiative dans ce domaine: en certains pays, les syndicats demandent et obtiennent le droit à l'information ou d'être présents dans les consultations des entreprises auprès des gouvernements en matière d'aide financière ou autre.

Un élément de retard dans l'application de ces systèmes réside dans l'attitude peu amicale d'un nombre considérable de directeurs et d'autres membres des bureaux de direction qui ne sont pas des salariés.

Il est impossible de comprendre la participation ouvrière dans l'élaboration des décisions sans insister sur le rôle de plus en plus grand que jouent les syndicats dans le domaine politique. Un nouvel accroissement de l'influence du syndicalisme sur les gouvernements était évident en Europe de l'ouest au cours de la troisième décennie d'après-guerre. Les programmes sociaux et économiques des gouvernements travaillistes furent définis après discussion avec les syndicats et souvent en accord avec eux. Les syndicats sont devenus plus militants et ont exercé une influence marquée sur la politique gouvernementale. Sans doute l'expression la plus significative de ce nouveau rôle consiste-t-elle dans le « contrat social » auquel on en est arrivé entre les gouvernements travaillistes et les centrales syndicales touchant l'économie nationale, les relations professionnelles et la politique sociale.

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Abonnements: France: 150 F — Étranger: 165 F  
Publication trimestrielle